

The American people need to know the truth and that is that the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, after thoroughly analyzing each section of the Patients' Bill of Rights, has determined that the bill would cost beneficiaries less than \$2 a month.

In the State of Texas, where I come from, we have 2 years of experience with no increase attributable to the protections that we are trying to pass on the Federal level. That is right, for less than the cost of a Happy Meal, patients in HMOs would have what they really need, which is fairness, protection, and accountability.

Another of the scare tactics is businesses will drop health insurance coverage. There has been no exodus by employers to drop health coverage in Texas after 2 years of the law. What we see is more States following the Texas experience. California just has, and what we need is to make sure we pass a law that affects all Americans and not just those under State insurance policies.

#### IT IS TIME TO RETHINK THE MINIMUM WAGE AND GIVE STATES FLEXIBILITY

(Mr. DEMINT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DEMINT. Mr. Speaker, as we begin to talk about the minimum wage in the coming weeks, our first priority should be to improve the lives of American workers. Although we may disagree on how to do this, we should all recognize the important role that States play in this debate. Our States are all different. Nearly every economic measure that we track varies by State: The cost of living, unemployment rates, tax burdens, welfare case loads, and average wages. Yet the Federal Government still has a one-size-fits-all wage policy that supposedly works as well in Arkansas as it does in New York.

Mr. Speaker, a State flexibility approach to the minimum wage would address these differences by allowing each governor and State legislature to play a role in determining the appropriate increase for their State. State flexibility is not about whether or not we raise the minimum wage but it is about who raises it. I urge my colleagues to help secure the future for American workers by sending these decisions back home.

#### WE HAVE THE REPUBLICAN CONGRESS TO THANK FOR FAVORABLE BUDGET NEWS

(Mr. WICKER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WICKER. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President showed how easy it is to pick up a magic marker and write some favorable budget information on a

poster. It is quite another thing, as we know, to actually make the tough decisions that have gotten us to a balanced budget. And forgive the partisanship, Mr. and Mrs. America, but we have the Republican Congress to thank for yesterday's favorable budget news.

It is easy to forget back in 1993 and 1994, when President Clinton and the Democrats had this town all to themselves and made no progress on balancing the budget. As a matter of fact, the President would not even try. In 1995, he came before this Congress and proposed budget deficits of \$300 billion a year as far as the eye could see.

Now that we actually have a budget surplus, Republicans want to pay down the debt and give a portion of that surplus back to the taxpayers in the form of tax relief.

President Clinton talks about making additional "investments". From the person who raised taxes but called them "contributions" and "sacrifices", additional national investments sounds like a lot of new Federal spending to me.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBBONS). The Chair will remind Members to address their remarks to the Chair and not to the viewing public.

#### OUR SENIORS NEED TO KNOW THAT SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS ARE PROTECTED FROM THIS DAY FORWARD

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop the Clinton raid on Social Security funds. Just think about this. If someone was working in a business and that business had a 401(k) or a pension plan, say it was the Georgia Widget Company and your name was Peggy and you had been working there for all of these years saving up and putting money into the 401(k) and then your retirement came and the owner of the widget company said, Peggy, I am sorry, we have spent your money on widgets and on tools that we need for the production of widgets and then the new driveway out there and some new trucks last year. Well, of course, that person would have the right to sue, which is what that worker would do.

The American seniors have had the same thing happen to them. After 30 years of Democrat-raiding of Social Security, they have put Social Security funds into a trust that has been taken out for roads and bridges and congressional salaries and government programs. It is time to stop that. It is time to put Social Security money in a lockbox for only Social Security use; no other use.

If the President could get the liberals over there in his party in the other

body to pass the lockbox legislation, which already passed the House, we could go home and tell our seniors their Social Security funds are protected from this day forward.

#### BY REDUCING THE NATIONAL DEBT, AMERICANS WILL BE ABLE TO AFFORD MORE

(Mr. BALDACCI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALDACCI. Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to be here today to commend the President for his economic leadership and bringing about a balanced budget back in 1993, and to be able to get our country on a fiscally sound footing and to be able to try to begin the process of retiring some of our debt.

A lot of the small businesspeople in Maine that have spoken to me have said that what we need to do is reduce the interest rates. We need to retire the debt and lessen the interest payments that we are making each year on the debt. This year our interest payments are going to total \$233 billion. By being able to reduce the interest on the debt and the interest that we pay, we are going to be able to afford people an opportunity to afford a house, afford a car, afford a student loan.

For example, by reducing by 1 percent a \$100,000 loan for a home or for a major purchase, that individual will save over \$60 a month; and over a 30-year mortgage will save close to \$24,000. That is going to do more to keep our economy healthy and keep our economy growing. That is the kind of leadership that we have been getting from the White House and we appreciate staying on that track.

#### THE PRESIDENT SHOULD RELEASE DOCUMENTS ON HIS DECISION TO RELEASE FALN TERRORISTS

(Mr. ROYCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, President Clinton will not release documents detailing the decision to grant 16 members of the FALN terrorist group clemency. The Clinton administration has an obligation to explain why it has let these terrorists out of prison. They claim the decision was not political and that it had been in the process for years. If so, show us the papers.

By claiming executive privilege, he is telling the American people that it is none of their business.

This is not right. It is the business of the American people. It is certainly the business of Detective Anthony Semft, a victim of FALN terrorism. The terrorism bomb left the police officer without sight in one eye, a 60 percent hearing loss and a fractured hip.

The House opposed and the Senate deplored the President's actions. Virtually every law enforcement agency in